

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEHRAN 00950 301429Z

42

ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 PRS-01 SP-02 H-01 INR-05

L-01 IGA-01 EB-03 OC-01 CCO-00 MC-01 NSC-05 NSCE-00

CIAE-00 OES-02 RSC-01 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 /048 W

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R 301300Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 23

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CSAF WASHDC

SECAF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 0950

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETEL, IR

SUBJ: SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT (AKA PEACE SCEPTER
III OR PEACE SWITCH)

REF: TEHRAN 10729 DECEMBER 20, 1974

1. WE MET JANUARY 30 WITH JOHN A. JOHNSON, PRESIDENT OF COMSAT GENERAL, WHO HAS SPENT PAST WEEK IN TEHRAN DISCUSSING SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT WITH KEY IRANIAN OFFICIALS. BASED ON REMARKS MADE BY THESE OFFICIALS TO JOHNSON AND OUR SUPPORTING COLLATERAL INFORMATION, IT SEEMS THAT IIAF MAY HAVE LOST ITS LEADING ROLE IN OVERALL CIVILIAN/MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT. AT LEAST, IT APPEARS THAT CIVILIAN SECTOR HAS BEEN GIVEN AUTHORITY TO PROCEED WITHOUT AWAITING IIAF DIRECTION. PLAN ORGANIZATION IS PLAYING A CENTRAL ROLE IN PROJECT WITH PRIMARY AUTHORITY ASSIGNED TO INCIPIENT SPACE AGENCY, PRESENTLY HEADED BY REZA QOTBI, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NIRT, AND QUEEN'S KINSMAN. APPARENTLY NEW SPACE AGENCY WILL CONTROL ERTS SATELLITE AND COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE SYSTEMS. LATTER
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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 00950 301429Z

WOULD PROVIDE SERVICES FOR NIRT/EDUCATION BROADCASTS, COMPUTER

DATA LINK AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER MILITARY WOULD HAVE SEPARATE DEDICATED SATELLITE SYSTEM OR WOULD SHARE CHANNELS ON CIVILIAN SYSTEM. IN OTHER WORDS, WHILE CONFUSION OFN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LINES OF AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY PERSISTS, CIVILIANS ARE MOVING AHEAD.

2. JOHNSON SAID HE DISCUSSED POSSIBLE COMSAT COLLABORATION WITH QOTBI WHO APPEARED VERY INTERESTED. COLLABORATION MIGHT INCLUDE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF COMSAT STAFF TO ASSIST IRANIAN SPACE AGENCY IN ESTABLISHING OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE, EVALUATING COMMERCIAL PROPOSALS AND IN OTHER WAYS BACK-STOPPING IN-EXPERIENCED IRANIAN PERSONNEL. OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES WOULD ALSO BE PROVIDED. QOTBI SAID HE WOULD SOUND OUT PLAN ORGANIZATION MINISTER MAJIDI ON COMSAT PROPOSAL WHEN MAJIDI RETURNED TO IRAN IN MID-FEBRUARY. HE INDICATED TO JOHNSON THAT GOI ANSWER MIGHT BE EXPECTED IN EARLY MARCH. SEEMS CERTAIN TO US THAT MAJIDI AND QOTBI WILL HAVE TO SEEK SHAH'S VIEWS.

3. IN RELATED CONVERSATION, JOHNSON WAS TOLD BY TCI DIRECTOR, MALEK-ABHARI, THAT A YEAR-LONG STUDY OF IRAN'S TOTAL TELE-COMMUNICATIONS REQUIREMENTS WAS IN PROGRESS. TCI WAS RECEIVING PROPOSALS FROM COMMERCIAL COMPANIES (E.G., HUGHES), BUT THESE WERE UNSOLICITED AND COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED UNTIL STUDY COMPLETED. USE OF ONE OR MORE SATELLITES SEEMS INEVITABLE, BUT HAS NOT BEEN DECIDED.

4. COMMENT: WE VIEW COMSAT INTEREST IN IRANIAN COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE PROGRAM AND QOTBI'S REACTION AS VERY POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS. EMBASSY SUGGESTED ON JANUARY 8, 1974 (TEHAN 190) THAT USG SEEK TO INTEREST COMSAT IN THIS PROJECT. DEPARTMENT TURNED US DOWN WITH STATE 12170. WE TRUST THAT AS PRESENT INITIATIVE COMES FROM COMSAT, DEPARTMENT WILL REGARD FIRM'S PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT IN A MORE POSITIVE LIGHT.

5. MAY WE PLEASE HAVE SOME REACTION TO THIS CABLE AND REFTTEL?
MIKLOS

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